

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

Sub 1  
AI 2  
1. A method comprising:

receiving a data signal formatted according to a data communication protocol at

3 a first data communication platform;

4 determining if the data communication protocol is supported by the first data

5 communication platform; and

6 indicating to a second data communication platform to receive the data signal at

7 a by-pass path of a filter engine of the second data communication platform if it is

8 determined that the data communication protocol is supported by the first data

9 communication platform.

1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein the data signal is a first data signal and the data

2 communication protocol is a first data communication protocol, the method of claim 1

3 further comprising:

4 receiving a second data signal formatted according to a second data

5 communication protocol at the first data communication platform;

6 determining if the second data communication protocol is supported by the

7 second data communication platform; and









8 engine if it is determined that the data communication protocol is supported by the  
9 second data communication platform.

1 18. The apparatus of claim 16, wherein said executing instructions operate to  
2 receive the data signal formatted according to the data communication protocol at a  
3 network processor and to indicate to a network switch engine, the network processor  
4 implemented in software and the network switch engine implemented in application  
5 specific integrated circuits (ASICs).

1 19. The apparatus of claim 16, wherein said executing instructions operate to  
2 determine if the data communication protocol is included in a pre-stored plurality of data  
3 communication protocols.

1 20. The apparatus of claim 16, wherein said executing instructions operate to tag  
2 header information of the data signal.